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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY _____ DATE _____

RDS ☐ or YDS ☐ EXT. DATE _____

TS AUTH. _____ REASONING _____

EXPOSURE EXPOSURE HIGHLIGHTS ☐

DECLASSIFIED BY ☐

REMARKS _____

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The removal of the bodies from Guyana was at the specific request of the Government of Guyana.

The President, acting under his constitutional authority as Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, ordered the departments of our government to take action to deal with this emergency. The operational decisions within the U.S. Government in this unique situation were made by the Secretary of State in conjunction with some of his Cabinet colleagues.

The federal government does not pay the expense of bringing back the remains of Americans who died abroad. That is a responsibility of their families or, if no next of kin can be found, the country where the death occurred is responsible for burial. It was evident, however, that it was beyond the ability of individual families or of the facilities available in Guyana to resolve the unprecedented problems that characterized this situation. In fact it was not even clear who the next of kin were without identification being established. The families of those who died at Jonestown are, of course, expected to bear the responsibility for the disposition of the remains in the United States.

The costs to the United States Government of an effort of this magnitude obviously are considerable although substantially less than the \$8 million figure used in some press reports, but it will be some time before the total is known. The Office of Management and Budget, together with other agencies, is reviewing the financial aspects.

The Department of Justice is fully exploring possible legal remedies which can be used to recover the cost the U.S. Government has incurred in removing and processing the bodies of Americans from Guyana. It will be some time before the results of these efforts are known, but you may be assured that we continue to make every effort to keep the costs to the U.S. Government to the minimum necessary.

If you have any further questions, you may wish to contact Deputy Assistant Secretary John Bushnell in our Bureau of Inter-American Affairs on 632-8562.

Sincerely,

DB/cw

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.

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